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CHAPTER IV

THE COMMUNISTS TAKE CONTROL OF POLICE AND ARMY

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AT THE END of the war, the Communist Parties were participating in governments with bourgeois parties not only in the 'Peoples Democracies,' but in France, Italy, Belgium, Austria and Finland. For about two years the Communist leaders called for 'national unity' and 'order' against strikes and workers' struggles in general. In France, Italy, Belgium, Austria and Finland, at the end of the honeymoon period, the Communist Party representatives left the governments or were thrown out of them and went over to the opposition, while in the 'Peoples Democracies' they took full control into their hands. This difference was due to the fact that the Communist Party did not take control of the police and army in any of the Western European countries as they did in the East. In none of the first group of countries did the Communists succeed in getting control of the Ministry of War and only in Austria and Finland did they for a time hold the portfolio of Minister of the Interior and hence control of the police. Even in Finland they did not completely succeed in 'purging' the police of 'unreliable' elements and introducing their agents, so that when the Communist Minister of the Interior—Leino—lost his position in the government, his power to use the police as a means of resistance was very limited.

The situation in all the satellite states was very different. Almost from the beginning, the Ministers of the Interior were Communists. They used their positions to recruit the old police officers into the Communist Party, or to replace them by new Communist Party members. As there are, of course, no statistics to show the changes in the party composition of the police in these countries, one can only rely for information on fragments of news in the press. However, in the case of Czechoslovakia there is the evidence of Hubert Ripka, who was the

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66/ 625 Minister of Foreign Trade in Czechoslovakia until February, 1948, and who is now in exile. He states that on the eve of the Communist coup of February 'All the important posts in the Ministry of the Interior were occupied by Communists; in the division of the security police, of nine departmental heads, five were Communists. At the head of the three branches of the Corps of National Security Police (S.N.B.) there were only militant Communists: Colonel Krystof, Dr. Hora and Dr. Goerner. In one of the particularly important sections of the security police (Section III–2), of nineteen officers, fourteen were Communists. In the directing office of the Corps of the National Security Police, of thirteen officers, nine were Communists. At Central headquarters of the political police, the three chief posts were in Communist hands. In the intelligence services the Communists dominated, even in the lower ranks. In the Prague headquarters of the provincial S.N.B., of five high officers, four were members of the Communist Party. Of seventeen regional directors of the S.N.B. in Bohemia, twelve were Communists. Of a total of seventy high officers of the S.N.B., about sixty were members of the Communist Party'. (*Czechoslovakia Enslaved*, London, 1950, p. 195). In the other satellites, there is no doubt that the Communist infiltration into key positions in the police was even more thorough. It is an apt comment that Andrássy Ut in Budapest, in which the dreaded headquarters of the Special Security Police is found, now bears instead the name of Stalin!

661 701 A similar situation existed in the army. A symbol of the complete control of the Kremlin over the armies of the satellite countries was the appointment of the Soviet Army Marshal, Constantin Rokossovsky, as Polish Minister of National Defence (7th November, 1949) in place of Marshal Michal Rola-Zymierski.* Rokossovsky was born in Warsaw when it was part of Russian Poland, but has had as much to do with Poland as the Irish-born Field-Marshal Montgomery with his native country. He became famous, or more exactly notorious, in Poland, at the time of the Warsaw uprising, as the commander

*Rola-Zymierski was one of the few of Pilsudski's Legionnaires who took an oath of allegiance to the Germans in World War I. He was a commander of the Polish Army in the war against Russia in 1920. In 1927 he was tried and convicted on a charge of bribery, degraded, cashiered and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. The Kremlin raised him to the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Polish forces and Minister of National Defence.

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661 although the present Prime Minister is a member of this party, he is rarely mentioned in the Hungarian press and his name, István Dóbi, is hardly known to the people.

The peasant parties of Yugoslavia, which in the past were very strong, apparently exist officially even today, but none of them has a daily, weekly, or any other paper and none of them is represented in Parliament. Their last representative was Dragoljub Jovanović, whose record included years of imprisonment under King Alexander's dictatorship. He was a secretary of the People's Front and a Minister in Tito's Government. But how could Tito forgive him when he declared in Parliament: 'The Communists are wonderful. They liberated us from the King and the Church; it only remains for them to liberate us from the Communist Party'? He was immediately expelled from the Government, from the People's Front, from his own Serbian Peasant Party and from his position as a professor at the University of Belgrade. Thus he became the one-man opposition to the Government in Parliament. But Tito could not tolerate any dissentient voice and steps were taken to close his mouth. In February, 1947, he was beaten up and severely wounded by hooligans. (The Yugoslav press did not mention this incident). Immediately afterwards he was tried and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment.

The fate of Stalin's quislings in the sham peasant parties was often grim. Thus, for instance, Romulus Zăroni, Minister of Agriculture in the first Groza Government, and Moga and Belea, the people who had led the Ploughman's Front since its foundation in 1934 in South Transylvania, when it was a small organisation with genuine peasant suppport at least locally, were removed from any positions they held after Moscow found they had served their purpose. The two most prominent leaders of the Hungarian 'village explorers' (after the war renamed the National Peasant Party) were Imre Kovács and Péter Veres: the former resigned his post as General Secretary and succeeded in escaping abroad; the latter was driven out of public life.

687 The important part played by the Communist-controlled
625 police in the liquidation of the peasant parties not only in Yugoslavia but also in the other 'People's Democracies' is clear from the following testimony of Peter Koev, an M.P. and a

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close friend of Petkov's. As Koev himself was too weak after his 'interrogation' to read his own statement in Parliament, Petkov read it for him:

'I shall first describe to you how the interrogation at the Militia Prison was carried out, so that you may have an idea of how "confessions" are produced, and of how Communist charges are built up. You reach a state of utter physical and moral collapse. You become completely indifferent towards your own life and fate, and you long only for an end, any end, which will bring a reprieve from suffering. But the complete collapse comes only at the moment when you realize that you are defenceless, that there is no law and no authority to protect you, and that you are in the hands of your interrogators for ever. This is actually what they try to make you believe right from the very beginning.

'The procedure is different from the one we have known so far. Now they first explain your guilt and then they ask confessions to prove it. The methods to obtain the confessions are mainly three: physiological—hunger, thirst, and lack of sleep; physical—torture; psychological—hints that your family have been arrested, will be tortured, etc.

'But let me tell you exactly what happened to me. For two days after my arrest I was confined to a small dark cell and given no food whatever. On the third day I was taken to the office of the chief of the Department of State Security. There I met Ganev, the chief of the Department "A" and the militia inspector, Zeev. They told me that I had been found guilty of an act of sabotage—the burning of Russian cotton stocks at the port of Burgas, in 1945, and that I had also taken part in the organization of a planned *coup d'etat* against the Government by Generals Velchev and Stanchev. They told me that I was the link between General Velchev and General Stanchev. Then they read confessions written by several officers giving details of their own guilt as well as of my own "participation" in the conspiracy.

'Immediately after that I was sent back to my cell and was not bothered with any interrogations for twenty-one days. I was left to "ripen". The first method used to achieve this was hunger—I was given only a little bread and water every day On the twenty-second day, a Saturday, at eight o'clock in the

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687 625 morning, I was taken up to the fourth floor for the second interrogation. It lasted without a break until eleven o'clock of the following Thursday morning. The interrogation went on, day and night, for twenty-four hours round the clock, without a stop, the interrogators themselves being changed every three hours. During all this time I was left standing, without any sleep, without any bread and, what is worse, without any water. I was handcuffed and I was not allowed to lean either on the wall or on the table. Every three hours the new interrogators asked the same identical questions, so that in the end I knew every question by heart. After the first twenty-four hours I did not feel any hunger. The lack of sleep makes your head feel hollow, and then it starts making funny noises. The interrogators insist that you repeat the same dates, the same names, the same hours, etc. On the fifth day I collapsed and was taken back to my cell, where I immediately fell asleep and slept for twelve hours.

'Waking up I thought the interrogation was over, but the same night, at eleven o'clock, they took me upstairs again into a bigger room. The Inspector Zeev, who was in charge of my interrogation said my obstinacy had obliged him to change his methods to something really tough. At his orders I was put on the floor. My hands were tied behind my back, and I was gagged. Then, for about two hours, I was beaten on the feet with a thick rubber whip. During the beating Inspector Zeev asked the same questions. The interrogations and the beatings were repeated four nights in succession. During the last night, besides many inspectors and militiamen, the Chief of the Sofia Militia, Veselin Georgiev, was also present. I was then thrown back into my cell, and I was not disturbed until 4th November, at half-past ten in the evening, when I was set free. After ninety days under arrest I was not asked any more questions, nor have I been given notice of any official charge against me.

(Signed) PETER KOEV.

Sofia, 29th November, 1946, National Assembly.'

(Michael Padev, *Dimitrov Wastes no Bullets*, London, 1948, pp. 93–4).

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character of the army and police in the 'People's Democracies'. These statements doubtless contain more truth than most of the other confessions, as they are based not on hearsay, but on the actual developments in Hungary, which can be checked by many Hungarians and by students. They show the continuity of the army and police institutions from the time of Horthy, and so give the lie to the Communist propaganda that since the 'revolution of 1944' they have an altogether new, democratic character. Pálffy stated: 'I sabotaged the drawing of working class cadres into the army, and I not only did not support the few workers who were nevertheless already there, or managed to get in, but pushed them back, relegating them to a secondary position. I was the chief of the military political department for three years and during these years not a single worker managed to get into a leading position even of a lower grade. On the contrary, in the interests of the aim previously mentioned, I brought back former officers of the Horthy army who were partly of pro-western convictions, partly of fascist, chauvinist sympathies, in great numbers; I promoted and supported them to high posts . . . My further destructive activities I carried out within the military political department where, in my capacity as president of the Party organisation, I consciously introduced such a dictatorial system'.

And Korondy[1] said: 'To build up this anti-democratic spirit we even published text-books for the police, copying the text-books of the old gendarmerie and police and at the beginning of 1948 compiling the material of the basic examination which was compulsory for all police officers from the old text-books, so that the new police officers could not pass the examination and could be removed from the police force. Through our activities we succeeded in making the training units of the police into an important armed force and because of their convictions they could at any time be utilised against the democracy and the democratic regime'.

It is obvious that Rákosi, Gerö and the other leaders must have known that for nearly five years workers were prevented from gaining high positions in the army and police and that the new text-books for police officers were copies of those used in the old gendarmerie. Pálffy and Korondy, and of course Rajk, merely took upon themselves to be the scapegoats, but in so

[1] [Colonel of Police in testimony at Rajk trial in Budapest.—Analyst]

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[625] doing they revealed the real situation in the army and police.
661 The Rajk trial shows once again that no man or movement can stray from blind obedience to Moscow without being branded as a 'fascist spy'. Two particularly glaring instances were brought out in the trial. One concerned Earl Browder, who for sixteen years was General Secretary of the American Communist Party and was 'unanimously' supported and applauded by all the Communist Parties in the world. Suddenly, without ceremony, when Moscow's line changed, he was removed from the leadership (July, 1945), then expelled from the Party (February, 1946). Szönyi blamed his influence for his own degeneration into an American and Yugoslav spy. He said: 'In this influence the theory of Browder, then leader of the Communist Party of the U.S.A., played a great part. Printed copies of Browder's books in French and German were distributed in great number by Lompar and Field both in Switzerland and in France, on behalf of the American secret service'. And later: 'In 1944 I openly professed views serving the interests of American imperialism. The treacherous theory of Browder played a great part in this.'

The second instance concerns the Zionist movement. This too comes very badly out of the trial, as an agent of American imperialism. The People's Prosecutor, with no relevance to the course of the trial, asks Szönyi: 'You were a member of the Zionist movement?' Szönyi replies: 'As far as I know, Ferenc Vági and György Demeter were members of the Zionist movement. In this connection it is known to me, and I also experienced it in Switzerland, that in general the Zionist movement maintained very close co-operation with the American secret sevrice'.

The defendent Szalai makes an odd amalgam that implicates the Zionist movement. He says: 'I was connected with the Horthy police. Detective Inspector Réti, the head of the political section of the Pécs police, enrolled me in 1933. Since 1930 I had participated in a Trotskyist Zionist movement, in which I received the sort of anti-working-class education that helped Réti's attempt to enroll me'.

The President asks the accused Pál Justus if he was a Zionist; and in case someone should forget that Szalai had been a Zionist, the question is repeated to him.

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have been made to the peasants, state cooperatives are still maintained in the heavy grain producing areas by forces other than the peasants' love of the soil and its products.

If the Yugoslav government will learn the meaning of Lord Acton's axiom on the nature of power, and if the West pursues an intelligent, long-range foreign policy supporting Yugoslavia against Soviet aggression, it may be possible to revive in Yugoslavia and hence in the Balkans as a whole the elements of an independent political life.

V

The months following the death of Premier Stalin in March 1953, saw a number of internal changes in the various people's democracies. The principal means of coercion and political control nevertheless remained unchanged: the army and the police forces. These were still bound tightly to Russian controls.

The total number of men in the satellite armies available for service with the Soviet army has been estimated at a million and one-half. Since they are not only trained under Soviet commanders, but operate under the Soviet military code, it is possible to state that the Sovietization of the satellite armies has been completed. Together with the armies, the satellite police form the backbone of the Soviet instruments of coercion. Estimated at a total of 700,000 men, police units organized in military formations range in function from the well-known secret police to People's Militia, Frontier Guards, and Railway Guards. Like the satellite armies, the satellite police are governed by Soviet regulations. Together they enforce a system of order which has been designed to conform with the Soviet model.

In common with Yugoslavia, certain states in the orbit are strengthening the weakest sector of the economy: agriculture. It is not certain that the Yugoslav experience compelled the